

**Clarifications for
FY 2015 Gap Year Program for Russian Students
Notice of Funding Opportunity**

Placement Locations/Partners

The NOFO states participants will be placed at community colleges, however if potential grantees wanted to pursue student placement at a four-year institution, they may do so. We would anticipate considerably higher costs associated with university fees which may make the proposal less competitive; however, if a creative method (or optional cost-share) would enable the applicant organization to place students at four-year institutions, in addition to community colleges – and the costs associated with this proposal were still competitive – we would not discourage that. We are interested in having the grantee facilitate placements at a wide range of educational institutions. Geographical diversity will also be considered during the review phase of the competition.

Letters of interest can be from associations representing community colleges or from an assortment of individual community colleges as the applicant sees appropriate. We do not expect applicants to have formal commitments from community colleges or other academic institutions at the time of application. But demonstrating that the applicant has established academic connections and is well positioned to assemble a network of placement institutions will make the applicant more competitive.

Participant Selection/Qualifications/Eligibility

The Embassy does not have a target participant range (minimum or maximum), but is obviously looking for the potential partner to provide this opportunity to as many Russian participants as possible. Ultimately this is a program design decision that your organization needs to make in conjunction with any partners with which you plan to work. All anticipated costs for the program (including proposed participant support) should be included in the budget submitted with the program narrative. Cost-share is not required, however the applicant organization may work with partners to minimize direct costs to the grant through cost-share.

Participants who have already completed one or two years of university, but still fall within the age range noted in the NOFO, would be eligible to apply for the program. However prospective applicant organizations should keep in mind that this is a NOFO for a Gap-Year Program, rather than a traditional undergraduate exchange program.

Russian students who follow a technical track that allows them to receive technical/vocational training at centers that are equivalent technical schools or community colleges would be eligible to apply as long as they fall within the age range noted in the NOFO.

Any additional criteria for participant selection would be a program design decision that your organization would need to make in conjunction with any partners with which you plan to work. Our particular guidance re participant age range is stated in the NOFO, under Section A8. Recruitment and Selection of Participants:

- Participants must turn 18 years of age prior to the conclusion of their exchange program.
- Participants must be no more than 20 years of age at the time of application.

Participant English Level

The Gap-Year Program does not have a specific minimum language requirement. When designing the program, prospective grantees should keep in mind that this is a NOFO for a Gap-Year Program, rather than a traditional undergraduate exchange program.

TOEFL scores will not be required for admission to the program. This guidance is intended to let the potential grantees know that a high level of English is NOT a criteria for selection of participants. Obviously, the grantee will need to get TOEFL scores from successful applicants to determine placements and course work.

Toefl testing costs may be considered an eligible expense for inclusion in a proposed budget.

Host Families/Dorms

Host families are the preferred housing option, however should dormitories be available at a reasonable cost, or as part of a cost-share, that option may be proposed. If dormitories are proposed, the applicant organization should clearly outline how the participants will experience the benefits of having a “host family” while living in student housing.

Program participants are not high school students, therefore host families may be compensated if necessary and appropriate and those costs may be included in the proposed budget. Again, cost-share is not required, however this may be one area where cost-share could be appropriate for consideration. Regarding the amount of potential compensation or the items/types of expenses that potential compensation would cover, this is a program design decision that your organization would need to make.

Evaluation

An external evaluator is not required for this program.